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SUBJECT: UNHRO REPORTS MASS GRAVES, MASS RAPE, AND ILLEGAL
EXPLOITATION OF RESOURCES

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED.

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The United Nations Human Rights Office (UNHRO) recently made public its Monthly Human Rights Assessment of the DRC for September 2007. The report described 70 different cases of abuse committed by armed groups including Nkunda forces, Mayi Mayi militia, and FARDC soldiers. This report highlights the continued impunity enjoyed by numerous armed groups throughout the DRC. It is Post's view that without reform in the military justice sector, these abuses will continue unabated. END SUMMARY

¶2. (U) In its September Human Rights Report, the UNHRO once again listed numerous violations of human rights committed in the DRC by various armed groups. While some of the cases received a higher level of attention, attacks and predation against the Congolese population by armed groups, including but not limited to the FARDC, continued to occur in all regions. This cable focuses on three cases which represent the range of the ongoing problems throughout the country. In September alone, the UNHRO report implicated the pro-Nkunda Bravo Brigade in the arbitrary execution of 21 civilians in the Rubare area of North Kivu; Mayi Mayi soldiers in a mass rape in Kieke Lesole, Orientale; and FARDC soldiers in the illegal trafficking and exploitation of natural resources in Katanga.

¶3. (U) From September 10-21, 2007 the UNHRO sent a investigative team to the Rubare area in North Kivu to verify the existence of mass graves left behind by pro-Nkunda forces from the Bravo Brigade. The UNHRO team verified the existence of at least 21 bodies found at a total of 3 sites. On September 10th, the team found the remains of nine bodies in three graves at the abandoned former HQ of the 2nd Battalion of the Bravo Brigade in Rubare. On September 20th and 21st, the team unearthed the remains of at least 6 bodies found in two graves in Katwiguru. They also located the remains of at least 6 other bodies in Kiseguru. The investigative team found each of the 21 bodies with their hands tied. The evidence suggested that the Bravo Brigade arbitrarily executed civilians before they abandoned their camps. The UNHRO team informed the military justice authorities (Auditeur Militaire Superieur and Auditeur Militaire de Garnison) of their findings and handed over photographic evidence.

¶4. (U) On September 29, 2007, the UNHRO and Congolese military judicial officials began investigating the allegation of mass rape committed in Kieke Lesole, Orientale between July 21-August 3, 2007. The HROs interviewed ten rape victims who identified the perpetrators as Mayi Mayi soldiers

under the command of Colonel Thomas. The UNHRO planned to return in October to continue the investigation.

¶5. (U) On September 7, 2007, the UNHRO intercepted the Commander of the 65th FARDC Brigade and his men on the Kolwezi-Lubumbashi highway in Katanga. The soldiers had in their possession 8 tons of copper from Gecamines. Post estimated the value of the load to be more than 50,000 U.S. dollars. Top local political and military officials appear to have been involved in the illegal trafficking and exploitation of natural resources in Katanga. The UNHRO referred the case to the Office of the Military Prosecutor.

¶6. (SBU) COMMENT: Armed groups continue to perpetrate human rights violations and participate in these types of activities with apparent impunity throughout the DRC. Without a concerted effort to reform and build capacity in the military justice system, along with some high-profile prosecutions and convictions, such abuses will likely continue unabated. END COMMENT

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